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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6025
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHJA/ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4255
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1083
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0554
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0717
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1701
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002405

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SUBJECT: NATIONALIST PDI-P PARTY TRIES TO STRENGTHEN ITS
ISLAMIC CREDENTIALS

REF: JAKARTA 002374

Classified By: POL/C Joseph Legend Novak, Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) The Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) party's nascent Islamic wing, Baitul (House) Muslimin (HM), is just getting off the ground. PDI-P, led by former president Megawati Soekarnoputri, is putting a lot of effort into building up the group. The grouping, which is closely linked with her husband, was clearly formed to boost PDI-P's Islamic credentials and its prospects in the 2009 national elections. Many doubt that it will be effective in drawing support to PDI-P, however. End Summary.

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HM -- Trying to get off the Ground

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¶2. (C) The PDI-P-linked HM is still getting off the ground. During its first national meeting held on August 25 in Jakarta, HM leaders agreed to combat radical Islam by promoting pluralism, moderate Islam, and Indonesian nationalism by using the country's nationalist Pancasila doctrine. Representatives from Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the Muslim Students Organization (HMI) attended. (Note: NU and Muhammadiyah are Indonesia's two largest mass-Muslim organizations with a combined 65 million followers.)

¶3. (C) Former president Megawati earlier this month announced a new line-up of heavy-hitting advisors for HM. Its key officials include:

- Syafii Maarif, former Muhammadiyah Chairman;
- Saig Agil Siradj, NU executive chairman;
- Faisal Basri, economist and former Secretary General of the National Mandate Party (PAN);
- Mohammad Sobari, former editor-in-chief of Antara, Indonesia's official news agency;
- Maj. General (Ret.) Cholid Ghozali, former head of the small Reform Star Party (PBR); and,
- Maj. General (Ret.) Adang Ruchanyanta, a longtime PDI-P insider.

¶4. (C) Other individuals associated with the party, though not official members, include: noted moderate Islamic scholar Azyumardi Azra; ultranationalist former Army Commander Ryamizard Ryacudu; Lt. General (Ret.) Suaidi Marassabesy; and, Judicial Commission head Busyro Muqodas.

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Bold Expansion Plans
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¶5. (C) HM insiders say that for now they are operating out of PDI-P's headquarters, though by the end of 2008 they hope to have their own offices in villages across Indonesia. South Sumatra, South Sulawesi, and West Java will be among the first branch offices HM sets up, contacts told poloff. (Note: PDI-P, along with Golkar, is one of the few Indonesian parties that can truly claim a national presence.) HM also eventually plans to open international offices, including in the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, to cater to Indonesians living abroad and to promote inter- and intra-faith dialogue.

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Former First Husband Involved
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¶6. (C) Contacts describe Megawati's husband, Taufik Kiemas, as the driving force behind HM. While Megawati attended some of the initial meetings between PDI-P leaders and their counterparts in Muhammadiyah and NU, Taufik did most of the talking, according to Gunawan Hidayat, the chairman of Muhammadiyah Youth. HM chairman Hamka Haq told poloff that the wing's name, which translates to "home for nationalist Muslims," was drawn from a speech Taufik once delivered.

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From the outset, Taufik clearly sought to draw NU and Muhammadiyah cadre into this new organization even before its official launch in March 2007: as early as December 2006, for example, Taufik used a meeting with NU head Hasyim Muzadi and Rozy Munir, head of NU's international relations board, to call upon NU members to join HM once the wing was formed.

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Other Politicians Not Impressed
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¶7. (C) Not surprisingly, other rival Islamic leaders with political aspirations view HM as little more than a political prop for PDI-P. Former presidential candidate Amien Rais on August 14 told poloff that he expects HM will only pay lip service to Islamic issues and that he does not view it as a political threat to his National Mandate Party (PAN). Rozy Munir of the NU on August 15 told Pol/C that he does not think many NU members will heed the call to join HM. Munir doubted HM would help PDI-P's chances in the 2009 national elections. (FYI: Munir is slated to be Indonesia's new Ambassador to Qatar.)

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Potential Moderate Counterweight?
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¶8. (C) If HM develops as its leaders hope, it could provide an additional counterweight to the conservative voices that in recent years have dominated Indonesian Islamic discourse. Nevertheless, the wing's political affiliation with a well-known nationalist/secularist party may undermine its effectiveness, according to contacts. The inclusion of respected apolitical figures like Syafii Maarif does give new weight to HM's Islamic credentials. That said, it may not be enough to overcome traditional stereotypes about PDI-P as a secular party too closely linked with Christian and Chinese Indonesians.

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